

REMARKS

Claims 1-14 have been amended. No claims have been canceled, and no new claims have been added. Accordingly, claims 1-14 are currently pending.

Priority

Submitted herewith is a certified copy of the priority document (JP 11-322117, filed November 12, 1999). Acknowledgment of the claim for priority and an indication that the document has been safely received would be appreciated.

In the Abstract

The Abstract has been rewritten into better form as required by the Examiner.

Drawings

Figs. 11 and 14 have been corrected as required by the Examiner. A separate letter to the Official Draftsperson and formal drawings incorporating the changes are enclosed.

35 U.S.C. §112

The claims have been amended to overcome the Examiner's objection. The Examiner is hereby invited to contact the undersigned by telephone with any questions.

35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-3, 5-7 and 9-13 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Almstead et al. These rejections are traversed as follows.

The present invention is directed to a notification method for notifying information of a function of any of a plurality of equipment forming a distributed system to a person that it should be notified of the function. The plurality of the equipment are interconnected over a transmission medium that has an original function (f1) of the equipment itself, a function (f2) for notifying information of the function to the person, a function (f3) detecting environmental information through a sensor or a transmission medium and at least one arithmetic unit or processor for performing other functions. Each of the plurality of equipment can communicate with each other interactively and can act as agents for other pieces of equipment.

An important feature of the present invention is that the information concerning the state of the function of any of the

equipment is informed to the user by the most suitable notification method. This most suitable notification method is determined by using the environmental information obtained by one or more of the plurality of equipment in the distributed system. For example, as described in connection with the first embodiment of the present invention, a plurality of such as an air conditioner, a refrigerator, a television, and a bathtub form a distributed system of a home automation system. With respect to the bathtub, the bathtub has an arithmetic unit or processor forming a bathtub management device. The bathtub management device has an original function (f1) such as the control of an amount of water, temperature of the water, etc., a function (f2) for notifying information such as the amount of water to a person and a function (f3) which detect environmental information such as the position of the person and the most suitable equipment located near the person.

A processor of the bathtub management determines the notification method, such as the environment of how the person is notified, what notifying means is used, and how the notification information is displayed. For example, if it is determined that a person has moved from equipment to another

equipment, the notification will be made by employing that second equipment to which the person has moved.

On the other hand, Almstead discloses a device monitoring system using a single monitor 12 which utilizes a time-coherent storage technique and a change-detect storage technique. Almstead does not consider a distributed system formed by plurality of equipment interconnected over a transmission medium. In addition, Almstead does not disclose or suggest controlling a way of notification depending upon environmental information and on the contents of information to be informed to a person. Instead, Almstead discloses how information is sent to a center device 14 as opposed to a person.

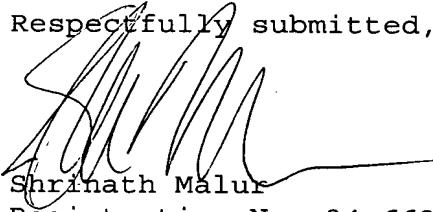
Therefore, while the present invention defines the most appropriate way to notify a person of certain information, Almstead discloses a diagnostic system that enables determination of a site anomaly or remote data analysis. Almstead's invention is directed to eliminate the disadvantages of conventional dead band techniques and time-coherent data storage techniques by combining the two techniques.

This is completely different from the presently claimed invention. As such, it is submitted that the pending claims patentably define the present invention over the cited art.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants contend that the above-identified application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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